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ABSTRACT

If there is a dominant theme in the research on the "production of culture," it is the tension between creativity and constraint. Constraints are imposed by the structures and processes of culture-producing industries and organizations in the attempt to cope with the uncertainties of generating and marketing cultural products. Yet the possibility, indeed necessity, of creativity still exists within these constraints. Even within situations of corporate creativity, the act of creation is seen primarily to be the work of individuals or small groups of collaborators who are able to acquire enough power to exercise some creative control. The research conducted within the production of culture perspective does offer insight into how this tension between creativity and constraint plays itself out to produce cultural materials. However this research offers much less insight into what is produced. Finally, meaning cannot be reduced to industrial, organizational, or psychological processes and yet meaning in media content cannot exist without those processes. It is only in the convergence of cultural criticism and cultural sociology--a fusion of text and process--that we can hope to account for meaning in popular culture. (Author/DF)

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STUDIES IN CREATIVITY AND CONSTRAINT

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PRODUCTION OF CULTURE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

STUDIES IN CREATIVITY AND CONSTRAINT
Assessment of the Production of Culture Perspective

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If there is a dominant theme in the research on the "production of culture" it is the tension between creativity and constraint. Constraints are imposed by the structures and processes of culture producing industries and organizations in the attempt to cope with the uncertainties of generating and marketing cultural products. Yet the possibility, indeed necessity, of creativity still exists within these constraints. And even within situations of "corporate creativity" (e.g. film and television) the act of creation is seen primarily to be the work of individuals or small groups of collaborators who are able to acquire enough power to exercise some creative control.

It is argued that the research conducted within the production of culture perspective does offer insight into how this tension between creativity and constraint plays itself out to produce cultural materials. It is also acknowledged, however, that this research offers much less insight into what is produced. Typically this research has sought generalizations which hold across various historical and social settings and so has not emphasized the relationships between production processes and particular settings which yield content with particular meanings. In short, this research rarely reads the text.

It is concluded that meaning cannot be reduced to industrial, organizational, or psychological processes and yet meaning in media content cannot exist without those processes. It is only in the convergence of cultural criticism and cultural sociology--a fusion of text and process-- that we can hope to account for meaning in popular culture.

Mankind, in the celebrated phrase of cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz, "is an animal suspended in webs of significance that he himself has spun." (1975:5) These webs include, of course, the rites of tribal societies--the cockfight, the rite de passage--but they also include the popular cultural of industrial societies--the film genre, the television series, the bestseller. These varied cultural forms, as James Carey suggests in another celebrated phrase, are all examples of communication which is "not directed toward the extension of messages in space but the maintainance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs." (1975:6) These forms, in short, are all ritual.

From a cultural perspective, it is the imaginative power of ritual which spans the continents and the centuries to compass ancient ceremony and modern media. Ritual is anything but mindless routine. Rather it is central to the processes of confirmation and transformation of social reality. Newcomb and Alley (1983), for example, draw upon the work of anthropologist Victor Turner to emphasize the tranformatory potential of the television ritual. Television, like the "liminal" or "in-between" phase of an initiation rite, is a release from socio-cultural constraint and the opportunity to envision and examine socio-cultural alternatives. These alternative visions are often unrealistic, even monstrous, but their very monstrosity may make them all the more compelling as deconstructions of the commonsensical and the taken-for-granted. Television thus provides commentary on social reality by constructing unreality.

Other writers in the cultural tradition emphasize the confirmatory role of culture material, the ways in which such material "maps a world of social relations" (Jensen, 1984:108) or are "symptomatic" of social concerns (Farrell, 1980). For example, Wright (1975) finds among the most financially successful film westerns a few relatively invariant plot lines which, he argues, portray

American experience at the time of their popularity. Thus the rise of the "professional" plot (in which a few highly skilled social outsiders band together to undertake--for money--a task which social insiders are unable to perform) reflects life in the highly technical and carefully managed post war American society. The professional western (e.g. "The Professionals," "The Wild Bunch") is, then, the carrier of an ideology which attempts to reconcile individualism with life in corporate America--the meaning of life is technical mastery and admission to the technical elite.

In contrast to the idealism of the cultural tradition, the critical tradition is grounded in materialism, but here too there is concern with the confirmatory power of popular culture. Gitlin (1979) for example, recognizes that television does confront social issues but necessarily does so in a way that "domesticates" them. The issues of race, gender and class may now be raised on television but the prevailing arrangements of capitalist consumer society are typically confirmed as offering the solution. This is Gitlin's interpretation of the concept of hegemony which finds on television not social commentary but social control.

While these positions on the interrelationships of media, culture and society are diverse, they do share an interest in professional mass communicators and their organizations. Thus Newcomb and Alley's view of television as a wellspring of sociocultural possibilities leads them to seek out the ultimate source of that spring. They find it in the work of the producer who often originates the series concept and who manages the series production. Similarly, Schatz (1981) begins his history of film genre with an analysis of the functions of genre in the old Hollywood studio system. And Murdock and Golding (1979) urge attention to how the occupational ideologies of professional mass communicators mediate the relationship between "the ruling ideology" and

the content of the mass media. Indeed, Peterson (1976) argues that the idealist/ materialist debate be set aside by sociologists to study the "production of culture" much as the nature/nurture debate has been set aside by biologists to study genetics. This production of culture perspective, according to Peterson, holds in abeyance the interpretation of cultural forms to focus on the mechanisms (analygous to DNA) which reproduce those forms. These mechanisms include, of course, the economic and industrial, organizational and individual structures and processes which generate, select and distribute popular cultural materials.

The intellectual agenda set for media studies by the production of cultural perspective has, to say the least, been more controversial than the agenda set for biology by genetics. Writing from a critical position, for example, Tuchman argues that research conducted from the perspective is typically a brand of organizational sociology which takes for granted contemporary capitalism and thus "obscure(s) the historicity of cultural products" and how such products are "implicated in the creation of ideology." (1983:332) Writing from a culturalist position, Jensen argues that is research views culture "as a container of messages processed along a line from sender to receiver" rather than as "the means through which people construct meaningful worlds in which to live." (1984:108) The research has, according to Jensen, failed to recognize the production of culture as a truly cultural enterprise, an enterprize "encompassing both the producers and the audience for which they create." (1984:110) These critics are, then, unwilling to hold the study of meaning in abeyance. Rather, they press a venerable set of issues in the study of media--the nature of mass mediated creativity, the role of the audience in that process, and ultimately the implications of these factors for the meaning of what is created. These writers conclude that the production culture perspective is deficient in its ability to address these enduring issues. The goal of this essay is not so

much to defend the production of culture perspective from its critics as to re-examine the positions on these fundamental issues taken by researchers working within the perspective. Ultimately, the goal is to assess the ability of this research to say anything interesting and useful about the creation of meaningful communication in an highly constrained industrial setting.

THE PRODUCTION OF CULTURE

Economic/Industrial Context

The processes of cultural production occur within and are shaped by what DiMaggio (1977) calls "the cultural economy." Following Peterson and Berger (1975), Dimaggio argues that degree of competition within a particular culture industry (e.g. broadcasting, recording, publishing) is related to degree of diversity and innovativeness of the products offered by that industry. In highly concentrated industries, a few firms often compete for shares of a single mass market with a few similar products. When a small number of firms can retain control of their markets and thus avoid the risks of significant innovation they can also control and routinize the work of their creative personnel. These creative staffs may well wish to innovate but are not offered the opportunity to do so by their organization. In more competitive industries, however, firms may find it more profitable to serve specialized market segments each with unique products. In this market setting firms cannot avoid the risks and uncertainties of innovation and often must delegate substantial freedom to their creative personnel. Peterson and Berger's (1975) own research shows, for example, that concentration in the recording industry has fluctuated cyclically and that a period of concentration have been marked by homogenity in recorded music while a period of greater competition have been marked by innovation and

diversity. Further, a long period of concentration and homogenity has been followed by "a brief burst of competition and creativity." (1975:170).

This relationship between market structure and media content is, of course, also borne out by the television industry. The commercial network oligopoly along with the system of advertiser support which is much more sensitive to audience size than to intensity of audience demand constrains television to a few genres (Dominick and Pearce, 1976) and limited range of themes which are emotionally and intellectually accessible to a very large portion of the possible audience. Programmers dare not stray very often or very far from the center of popular taste for fear of loosing one sort of viewer or other from the coalition of viewers which make up the mass audience. "The gravity of television," in actor Robin Williams' phase, "keepings pulling you down to mediocre." (Goldman, 1982) The gravity metaphor is apt: market structure pulls television not toward the worst possible content but rather toward the mediocre, the center of the audience's cultural world. Contrast this wit' the structure and content of book publishing in which as many as 12,000 pub ishers (Powell, 1982), many of them very small and highly specialized, generate a vast array of content. Publishers are allowed, indeed forced, to specialize; and as if in a state of reduced gravity, they fly off in nearly every conceivable direction. But even in this most diverse of cultural industries there is concern about the impact of concentration among publishers (Coser, Kadushin and Powell, 1981; Powell, 1982; Whiteside, 1981) and about constrictions within distribution channels (Turow, 1977, 1979).

From the production of culture perspective, then, it is clear that market structure may lead a media organization to constrain its output. From the point of the organization's management, on the other hand, the issue is not CONSTRAINT of content but rather SELECTION of content. Network programmers must select

producers and series and publishers must select authors and titles which meet the demands of their particular markets. The criteria for selection, even in concentrated and relatively noninnovative industries, are not well defined, however. It is unclear who can generate content which meets market requirements. Further, it is not ever clear what those requirements are or will be--consumer tastes are unstable if not unknowable. Organizational theorists characterize this situation as one of "uncertainty" (Thompson, 1967; Perrow, 1979) or "turbulence" (Emery and Trist, 1965) at both the input and output boundaries of the organization and, as these theorists would predict, strategies which confront and, to some extent, cope with these uncertainties have evolved. These strategies are the mechanisms by which content is at once selected and constrained.

Basic to these strategies is the segmentation of cultural industries into functional subsystems (Hirsch, 1972). Thus, some workers are separated from the managerial subsystem (i.e. the network, the publisher, the recording company) and are accorded "artist" or "professional" status and work on a temporary, freelance basis. These workers constitute the creative or technical subsystem. Some culture industries may also have separate promotion and/or distribution subsystems such as book jobbers and retailers or movie distributors and exhibitors (DiMaggio and Hirsch, 1976). These subsystems are linked and coordinated by boundary spanning agents such as record, movie and television producers who are instrumental in assembling the sort of creative talent which can meet market demands. This industry structure thus provides the managerial subsystem with flexibility to meet changing consumer tastes, spreads the risks of innovation to other organizations, and delegates substantial creative responsibility to those who, presumably, have a special talent for generating commercially viable content.

Hirsch (1972) likens this industry structure to the craft administrative system of the construction industry (Stinchcombe, 1968). DiMaggio (1982) argues, however, that the arrangement is more adequately characterized as a "brokerage administration" system. He notes that craft administration is based on employer-employee relations structured by contracts and, more importantly, by clear standards of professional competence. In cultural industries, however, employer-employee relations are marked by informality and negotiation because standards for evaluation of finished products are vague or entirely unknown. DiMaggio further specifies three types of brokerage administration systems: (1) pure brokerage in which the broker (e.g. book editor) mediates between administrative decision-makers and artists; (2) entrepreneurial brokerage found in the most uncertain or turbulent setting in which managers abdicate decision-making to the broker (e.g. record producer) and (3) centralized brokerage found in much less turbulent settings in which the broker (e.g. television producer) represents decision-maker's views to artists and who is also subject to close supervision.

Beyond this basic structural feature of cultural industries, Hirsch (1972) outlines several other strategies which may be found in at least some of these industries. He argues, for example, that record companies, book publishers and movie studios all deploy relatively many contact personnel at their output boundaries linking the organization to retailers and "surrogate consumers" (e.g. disk jockies in the case of record companies). The goal of this strategy is often to co-opt the decision-making of promoters and distributors. Another strategy which may be employed by firms in these industries is the overproduction and differential promotion of products. Because the cost of producing a record or book is relatively low, many are produced and become available for promotion and distribution. However, only those which entrepreneurial

judgment or available feedback indicate have commercial potential are promoted heavily and faultering products can be quickly replaced on store shelves. While the television industry differs from those studied by Hirsch in that its market environment is less turbulent, networks still have departments to look after their relationship with affiliated local stations. The networks also commission many more treatments, scripts and pilots than can become series so that a faultering series can be quickly (in recent years, VERY quickly) replaced with another.

The notion of a faultering television series points out another strategy for coping with shifting and uncertain consumer tastes--the use of ratings and other sorts of research. By providing a widely accepted audience measurement system, ratings help structure and regulate the interchange between networks, affiliates, advertisers and program suppliers. Ratings, even if methodologically imperfect and inconsistently used by decision makers, enforce the rules of the television game as established by the economic arrangements of the industry. Indeed ratings are the central mechanism by which the economically-imposed constraints impinge upon the selection of content, though as Perkurny (1982) argues, ratings and other such coping strategies (i.e. selection of producers with strong track records and adherence to tried-and-true series formulas) do not, and cannot, fully routinize the industry.

Attempts to make business stable and predicatable and, thus, more manageable through routinization of the content selection process continually tugs against the need to create new and different, even if only slightly different, products. This is what DiMaggio and Hirsch (1976) refer to as the pervasive tension between innovation and control in cultural industries. And so, for example, television networks recognize that even their industry requires constant innovation and thus contract out the tasks of series creation and

production to independent brokers. At the same time, the networks attempt to control creation and production through elaborate audience research requirements for pilots (Gitlin, 1984) and through close monitoring of ongoing productions in the attempt to insure adherence to broadcast standards and, perhaps more importantly, to the formulas which, presumably, have given the series whatever success it may enjoy (Pekurny, 1982). Of course, it is also the networks which apply ratings data to the selection of series for continuation. It is from the pull and tug between innovation and control that television programs and other cultural products emerge which are at once new and old, endlessly varied and yet eternally the same.

Creativity Within the Organizational Setting

The tension between innovation and control is a feature not only of the selection of content by the managerial subsystem of an industry but also the creation of content by the technical subsystem. Television provides the best understood example of how this industrial or interorganizational fact of life penetrates organizational and, ultimately, individual life as well. As the broker in the centralized brokerage system of television, the producer is commissioned by the networks to generate programming Thus, television is a producer's medium, as Newcomb and Alley (1982, 1983) argue, because it is the producers who assemble the creative talent and oversee their work from start to finish. Clearly schedules, budgets, and all the other creative controls imposed by the networks constrain producers and their organizations but there is still the possibility for some creative freedom. For example, producers with impressive track records of successful productions can sometimes win substantial autonomy from network supervision. (Perkurny, 1982). Ironically, producers who are marginal to the television industry may also be able to exercise creative

control when they are in a position to deliver a take-it-or-leave-it ultimatum to the network as Norman Lear was able to do with the concept for "All In The Family" (Turow, 1982). And even within the closely controlled setting of on-going series production, producers may be able to "work within around and through" (Newcomb and Alley, 1982:69) the constraints to achieve enough control to embody at least some of their personal visions and values in their shows.

Producers as agents for networks and, at the same time, as managers of the creative process must themselves cope with the uncertainties of creation and so experience the tensions between innovation and control. Here too coping strategies have evolved. Much as the networks have delegated responsibility for creation to producers, so producers divide the labor of creating programming among writers, story editors, production designers, directors and many other creative and technical personnel. This division of labor facilitates the orderly and predictable flow of work through the production organization and thus routinizes the "core technology" (Thompson, 1967) of television production to some extent.

Another coping strategy is to rely upon proven personnel to fill the various creative roles. Just as the producer may well have been chosen by the network based upon track record so the producer may select creative personnel based upon track record. Faulkner's (1982) study of track records within the film industry is instructive: an analysis of screen credits from 1964 to 1979 indicated that a majority of producers, directors, screen writers and cinematographers worked on one film during that period and only a tiny fraction worked on more than five or six films. Further, those who worked on relatively few films tended to work with others who had relatively few credits while those with many credits worked with others of similar accomplishment. The most productive producers tend to hire creative personnel from an "inner circle,"

Faulkner argues, "to reduce uncertainty, (b) narrow the complexity of their choices, and (c) increase their confidence while boosting their perceived chances of securing control over a turbulent environment." (1982:95) The use of track records, or "career portfolios" in Faulkner's more elegant phrase, is a rationalized if not always rational way to cope with the uncertainties of innovation. According to one of Faulkner's informants:

> "You could shop around and see who's good but not expensive but if your picture goes down the drain, the people who are working with you, and the people in charge, say, of distribution at Disney, Universal, Fox--wherever--will scream, 'Idiot, why didn't you hire the best?' So there's pressure to hire a name." (1982:96).

According to Pekurny (1982) the situation is much the same in television.

As managers of somewhat bureaucratized, if not really bureaucratic organizations, producers can exercise authority through such overt control mechanism as budgets, schedules and, of course, explicit instructions but they may also exercise control through less obtrusive mechanisms such as reliance upon production conventions (Sanders, 1982). Thus, according to Turow (1978), criteria for casting minor television parts (e.g. credibility and visual balance) are well known and generally accepted among producers, casting directors and agents. Further, series are typified according to casting needs (e.g. "beautiful people", "real people", "street people"). Similarly, according to Tuchman (1974), potential talk show guests are typified in a variety of ways to facilitate the assembly of the show. These shared understandings of what must be done--that is, what is wanted by the producer--control work by establishing the premises for worker's decision making (March and Simon, 1958; Perrow, 1979).

Sanders (1982) distinquishes these sorts of production conventions from product conventions which are features of content that producers consistently employ and that consumers come to expect. Examples are, of course, the various standardize features of film and literary genres (Cawelti, 1969, 1976; Kaminsky,

1985; Schatz, 1981) and the formulas for particular television series (Brown, 1968; Pekurny, 1982). Such product conventions may well contain substantial meaning--"define and express a world," as Jensen (1984) suggests--but they also serve to regulate and coordinate the tasks of production. Indeed, the distinction between production and product convention is often not very clear. Becker (1982), for example, finds conventions to be features of art works but also to be shared understandings which unite artists and support personnel into "art worlds." Ryan and Peterson (1982) synthesize the distinction between production and product conventions with the argument that, in country music recording at least, it is not so much well established conventions or formulas which regulate and coordinate the production process as "product images"--models or images continually shaped and reshaped by recently successful songs.

In a variety of ways, then, culture producting organizations struggle to bring their tasks under control. Even in television, however, these strategies cannot reduce the production process to routine. Not even television is a factory. Ultimately, it is the individual worker who confronts the creative task or at least some part of it.

Creativity as the Work of Individuals

The creation of art and literature has long been seen to be the work individual artists and authors. But even in settings of "corporate" creativity (DiMaggio and Hirsch, 1976) there is the opportunity, indeed necessity, for individual creativity. And so it is that Newcomb and Alley (1983) find the meaning of television in work of individual producers just as a generation of critics and historians have found the meaning of film, or at least some films, in the work of directors.

The act of creation does not yield easily to either the inquiries of researchers or the introspection of practitioners themselves. Photograhers and cinematographers simply have "a good eye" while writers may have "an ear for dialog." Programmers may have a "golden gut" while successful producers have "the instinct" or best of all "magic." Case studies, biographies and insider anecdotes do, however, yield some insight into the course of particular creative events such as the development of innovative television programs. Some good examples include Turow's [1982] comparative case studies of innovation in television, Gitlin's [1984] history of the development of "Hill Street Blues," Kaminsky's biography of film director Don Siegel and Gerrold's [1973] memoir of "Star Trek."

If generalizations about the act of creation remain elusive, it is at least possible to appreciate how industries and organizations structure not only the work activities of individual creators but also their artistic consciousness. Here again the television producer provides the best researched example. The producers studied by Cantor (1971) and by Newcomb and Alley (1982, 1983) do experience powerful constraints--the pull of the "gravity of television"--and yet many of them have found opportunities for creative self expression. Indeed a central creative challenge of the medium is to find and exploit such opportunities. And so, for example, producer Quinn Martin takes obvious pride in detailing for Newcomb and Alley how he manages his production company to achieve as much creative control as possible and, in turn, to embody personal values in his productions. Martin's attitude is an example of the professional value system which, according to Cantor, is marked by a belief in the creative possibilities of television and the need to struggle for creative freedom but also the need, finally, to bow to the authority of the network. While this professional value system is not the only one found by Cantor, it is the system

which best characterizes the "self-conscious artistic producers" studied by Newcomb and Alley and which accounts for the best of television. This search for meaningful creative opportunity within industrial and organizational contraint is also a theme of Griff's (1960) study of commercial artists, Faulkner's (1971) study of studio musicians and Peters and Cantor's (1982) study of aspiring screen actors.

It is ironic that constraints are often imposed upon creators in the name of the audience--the ratings, according to the networks, help give the audience what it wants--and yet the creators' image of their audience is so undeveloped (Cantor 1971). The industry does provide creators with data about audience size and demographic composition but, of course, this is an image not of audience but rather of market. Even so, some researchers (e.g. Gans, 1957) have argued that creators do consciously strive to please their audience. Espinosa's (1982) ethnography of a television story conference, for example, assumes that audience interests and needs are being considered by the participants but is it clear from the report that the audience is rarely invoked explicitly. If asked, the participants might well have defended their ideas with generalizations about the audience but it is likely that such generalizations are based less on exposure to the television audience or even audience research than exposure to television personnel and television content. Writers learn their craft not by learning an audience image but rather by learning a product image--an image which, as Ryan and Peterson (1982) argue, assures not so much acceptance by the audience as acceptance by superiors and co-workers down the production chain. Network executives and co-workers are, according to Pekurny (1982), the real audience for television creators.

Thus, the task confronting individual creators, particularly in television, is set less by their own attempt to communicate with an audience than by their industry's attempt to tap a market. This industrial and organizational context constains creative work but it is important to remember that it also makes such work possible. Mass mediated creativity requires a mass medium. The constraints of the medium, as Ettema (1982) argues, may be seen to form a puzzle which creators are called in to solve. From this point of view the best popular culture is the best solution within the economic, industrial and organizational constraints of the particular medium.

CREATIVITY AND CONSTRAINT

Three issues served as the point of departure for this excursion into the literature on production of culture: the nature of mass mediated creativity, the role of the audience in that creative process and, finally, the meaningfulness of what is created. What, then, can be said of these issues within this research tradition?

If there is a dominant theme in this literature it is the tension between innovation and control or creativity and constraint (Ettema and Whitney, 1982). The constraints are imposed by the structures and processes of culture-producing industries and organizations often in an attempt to cope with the uncertainties of generating and marketing cultural products. Yet the possibility, in fact necessity, of creativity exists within these constraints. Even in television and film, sites of corporate creativity, the act of creation is still seen primarily to be the work of individuals or small groups of collaborators who are able to acquire enough power (thanks to strong track records, negotiation skills, or other factors) to exercise creative control. True creativity in this

setting is, then, working within the constraints but ultimately transcending them as Bach transcended the constraints imposed by patrons and musical form.

How then, does this tension play itself out to produce meaning? If, as the culturalists argue, popular culture both "expresses and constitutes experience" (Jensen, 1984) then such experience has important limits. Television may usually speak only of that which is most accessible and least threatening though certainly the challenging and unsettling is occassionally heard. Other media with other market structures such as books and recorded music may be able to speak of such things more presistently and compellingly in the course of addressing their diverse market segments. But even with books and records limits exist due to the structure of the distribution channels and other factors.

While these industrial and organizational structures and processes limit what is said they may, at the same time, clarify and elaborate what is said. Thus, for example, Schatz (1981) and Kaminsky (1985) both suggest that the form, content and meaning of film genres have developed through a process of marketing trial and error. Many films each somewhat different have been produced and those which have been most successful have defined and refined a product image to be learned, then emulated and eventually altered. And so a genre evolves. Individual creators need not have a clear idea of who their audience is or what that audience wants to hear. They need not even grasp the full meaning of their work; for it is the industry system as a whole through box office receipts and track records which may attune content to audience and to critic. While individuals do produce and direct individual films, the meaning of the genre need not be sought in the artistic vision of individuals. Similarly, long running, and persumably meaningful, television series are the result of a process of marketing trial and error--many series are created, few survive to be critically

analyzed. There is, then, a sense in which organizations and whole industries create.

Having said this, however, it is important to add that the cultural industries, particularly television, do not inevitably or necessarily give audiences what they want. If anything, they inevitably and necessarily give markets what they will accept. Much of television, much of the time, is probably more tolerated than liked by viewers. The ratings are indifferent to the distinction and creators know little more about their viewers than what the ratings tell them. The assumption that popular culture speaks clearly and compellingly to a great audience is always problematic but is probably most justified in cases of large and coherent bodies of popular material such as the film genre and long-running television series.

This evolutionary notion of the meaning of film genre or television series makes Peterson's (1976) genetics metaphor for the production of culture all the more compelling. The production of culture perspective does indeed offer insight into <u>how</u> culture is reproduced much as genetics accounts for how physiological characteristics are reproduced. It is clear, however, that the production of culture perspective offers much less insight into <u>what</u> is reproduced. Typically, research from this perspective has sought generalizations which can hold across various historical and social settings and so has not emphasized the relationships between production processes and particular settings which result in particular meanings. That is to say, these researchers have not usually made it their business to read the meanings of texts. Their resulting generalizations are in a sense, then, meaningless though they need not be. For example, Peterson and Berger's (1975) arguments about the relationship between recording industry concentration and musical diversity are couched in a description, if not interpretation, of post-war recorded music.

The socio-economic processes described thus becomes more meaningful by helping to account for the emergence of rock and roll from postwar pop much as jazz emerged from Tin Pan Alley earlier in the century. Peterson and Berger do not, then, attempt to reduce meaning in popular music to market structure but rather to enumerate some of the conditions necessary for those particular meanings to be made. Meaning cannot be reduced to industrial, organizational or psychological processes and yet meaning cannot exist without these process. It is only in the convergence of cultural criticism and cultural sociology that we can hope to account for the meaning of cultural materials. A sophisticated fusion of process and text should be at the top of the scholarly agenda for media studies.

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